

Inpute solution processes FÁS SafePass forms



FÁS

As the National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS anticipates and responds to the needs of a constantly changing labour market which employs over two million people. Through its regional network of 66 offices and 20 training centres, FÁS operates training and employment programmes; provides a recruitment service to jobseekers and employers, an advisory service for industry and supports community-based enterprises

The Challenge

The remit of FÁS expanded when the Construction Safety Partnership Plan recommended that all construction site personnel should have basic safety training. To meet this requirement, FÁS developed the Safe Pass one-day Safety Awareness Training Programme. All personnel engaged in the construction sector must now complete the Safe Pass Programme and on completion of the course, participants are issued with a Safe Pass card by FÁS.

Given the enormous volume of Safe Pass applications (over 500,000 in the first two years), a backlog of 30,000 applications soon developed. The turnaround time from receipt of application to issuing a Safe Pass card was up to six months.

'The whole process was manual and very time consuming', says Paula Dunne, Project Manager. 'We had to do something immediately.'

The Solution – Inpute Technologies

Inpute Technologies was invited to demonstrate how their solution, using Cardiff Teleform and Inpute Document Sever, worked.

Using sample applications, Inpute gave a demonstration of the system which was 100% successful. This was followed by a two-week pilot project and again, the system functioned flawlessly.

'At first, we were sceptical that the software could decipher handwriting and that the proposed solution would work,' says Dunne. 'Then, during the pilot project, we brought together people from the SafePass management team, IT and Procurement Departments and showed them the system. Everyone was sold on the solution as soon they saw the results!'

FÁS engaged Inpute Technologies to provide their solution to scan, validate and process Safe Pass applications.

Summary

- FAS is the Irish national training and employment authority. Their remit includes the Safe Pass Programme
- Units capability to process forms increased from 1,500 to 5,000 forms per week following installation of solution, with turnaround time reduced from six months to three to four weeks
- Solution includes handwritten (ICR) and machine print (OCR) recognition software
- Automated validation of captured data based on business rules
- Export of data to Oracle backend, Inpute Document Server (IDS) and automated generation of output for production of Safe Pass ID cards
- Storage of both form images and applicants photograph for future retrieval using IDS.

Solution

- Cardiff TeleForm Workgroup Edition
- Inpute Document Server (IDS)
- Bowe Bell + Howell Truper scanners

Immediate, Welcome Results

The new system vastly increased the numbers of applications that could be processed. Previously, where FÁS Staff had been processing 1,000 – 1,500 per week, they were now processing up to 5,000 applications per week, clearing any backlog. Turnaround times had dropped from six months to *three to four weeks*.

‘Once you were processing, it went so smoothly. It just flowed. Each step was straightforward and it ... it just worked!’ Dunne says ‘Now, we’re inputting yesterday’s applications. The system is much more streamlined and straight forward. And our reporting system is much simpler as well.’

The ability to scan handwritten applications was only one reason the system was so much faster. Now, by capturing all the Safe Pass data electronically – including photographs – it was possible to digitally send ‘Output Files’ directly to the printer, ready for print.

Data Storage and Retrieval

Another purpose and benefit of Inpute’s system is that all the information remains in the FÁS database, ready for instant retrieval to answer the numerous queries FÁS staff receive every day.

Before? ‘We stored all of our paper files manually and held them on site. We then began using a storage company to store files and recall them when necessary. While that is a very efficient system, on an on-going basis it is not ideal and could work out quite expensive.’

Also, workers would often lose their Safe Pass Card and have to apply for another. The turnaround time for replacements has reduced from eight to ten weeks to less than ten days.

A User-Friendly System

Inpute initially provided all necessary training in using the system, but it is such an easy-to-learn, intuitive system that it is now a simple matter for FÁS staff to familiarise themselves with it.

‘It’s just so user-friendly,’ says Dunne. ‘Once you’ve used it, you can show someone else how to use it. It’s as simple as that.’

‘Support from Inpute is excellent,’ says Dunne. ‘At the start, they helped design the form ... They seemed to know exactly what was needed, and they guided us through the process from start to finish. We told them what we wanted and they told us exactly how it could be done. Even now, if they can’t help us immediately over the phone, they always send someone in right away. They’re very helpful.’

Into the Future

The success of Inpute’s system in the Safe Pass scheme has encouraged FÁS to apply it to other initiatives; beginning with the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) This initiative provides training, assessment, certification and registration of non-craft operatives in the construction sector. FÁS is also expanding the system to include the scanning of applications for replacement Safe Pass Cards when candidates have lost their cards.

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Paula Dunne, FÁS Project Manager

Contact Details

Frankfort Centre
Dundrum Road
Dublin 14

Tel: + 353 1 2156275

Fax: + 353 1 2156260

Email: info@inpute.com

Web: www.inpute.com